

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-852-3345, Ext. 4336 or 271-4336

Joining Households

The Older Person and the Care-Giving Family

Joining households has much to offer everyone. First there is the advantage for the older person of being close to loved ones. He or she may feel safer living with family. If there are children in the home, a special bond can develop between them and their grandparent. Family caregivers who are maintaining their own household and who also help the older person with meals, laundry, housework, or yard work, may feel it is easiest to combine the two households.

Making the Decision

Past family relationships will greatly affect the decision being made. If it has been hard to talk with each other in the past, and relationships are strained, then living together may not be the best plan. However, if the family got along well in the past and there is good communication among the people involved, then living together can be a very rewarding experience for all.

Planning

Think about the following factors when making the decision to live together:

- Physical Care

What kind of help with bathing, medicine, and other types of personal care does the older person need? Can other family members do this, or are there community services which help out?

- Space in the Home

Can the person walk up stairs or will room on the main floor be needed? Will someone have to give up their room? What arrangements can be made for privacy?

- Costs

What household expenses will increase? Can the older person contribute? Will a family member have to cut back on work hours, thereby decreasing income? Perhaps there will be financial advantages for both the older person and the family sharing expenses.

- People's Feelings

Adding another person to the household will affect everyone. Space may be tight, privacy may be lost, old arguments may surface again. However, there is much to be gained from the closeness of living together.

Communication

Communicating expectations, wishes, and fears ahead of time is the key to getting a good start. Try a talk together about the following:

- Each person's reasons for making the move.
- What each person wants from this arrangement.
- How the older person will be included in family activities.
- What the financial arrangements will be, with a look at costs and contributions from everyone.
- How the family will know when it is time for a change.

Making It Work

This type of change is a major adjustment for everyone involved. The keys to making it work are:

- Communication

Talk about each individual's need for space and privacy.

Discuss expenses.

Talk about the expectations you have for one another.

- Social Activity

Plan time together and time apart.

Help arrange it so the older person sees old friends.

Encourage activity participation if the person is at an adult day-care or senior center.

There is much to consider when making the decision to live together. With good communication, planning, and use of community resources, this can be a positive experience for all.